



MINUTES

New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

September 27, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Joe Bolkcom,
Co-chairperson
Senator Paul McKinley,
Co-chairperson
Senator James F. Hahn
Senator Jack Hatch

Representative Mary Lou Freeman,
Co-chairperson
Representative Wayne Ford
Representative Jodie Tymeson

MEETING IN BRIEF

.....

Organizational staffing provided
by: Tim McDermott, Senior Legal
Counsel, (515) 281-3444

Minutes prepared by: Joe
McEniry, Senior Legal Counsel
(515) 281-3189

-
- I. Procedural Business.
 - II. Citizen Comments.



New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

I. Procedural Business.

Call to Order. Co-chairperson Mary Lou Freeman called the New Iowans Study Committee to order at 6:05 p.m., on Tuesday, September 27, 2005, in the ABC Conference Room at the Arrowhead Educational Building in Storm Lake, Iowa. Also present were Senators Steve Kettering and John Kibbie.

Opening Statement. Co-chairperson Freeman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the Committee is in Storm Lake to listen to the ideas and concerns expressed by immigrants and refugees who have settled in the Storm Lake area.

Adjournment. The hearing adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

II. Citizen Comments.

Mr. Mark Prosser — Public Safety Director, Storm Lake. Mr. Prosser stated he wants to emphasize the positive aspects of immigration on Storm Lake. He stated the vast majority of immigrants settling in Storm Lake are hard working and cause no problems. He said the most significant problem for the police is the language barrier. He noted that one in three contacts with the police involve a person who does not speak English. He emphasized the city needs more funding to educate officers in other languages.

Ms. Sara Messerly — Department of Workforce Development. Ms. Messerly stated the Department of Workforce Development has many services available to new Iowans. She listed the following services: job placement, job referrals, use of the resource room, unemployment insurance, labor market information, vocational rehabilitation, proficiency testing, and references to other partner agencies.

Mr. Todd Hudspeth — Hospital Administrator, Buena Vista Regional Medical Center. Mr. Hudspeth emphasized communication is a major problem for the hospital when providing services to immigrants and refugees. He stated that a team from the hospital recently traveled to Mexico to gain a better understanding of the Mexican health delivery system. He noted the Mexican health system is superior to our own system because access to health care is considered a basic human right.

Mr. Dan Anderson — Iowa Central Community College. Mr. Anderson commented that Iowa Central Community College is working diligently to bridge the language gap that exists for new Iowans. He noted the community college has an innovative new program to help people learn English and pursue career opportunities.

Ms. Venus Vendors-Walsh — New Iowans Center. Ms. Vendors-Walsh stated that New Iowan Centers offer services that are not available at Department of Workforce Development offices. She stated the New Iowan Centers have outreach specialists who go into the homes of clients after 5:00 p.m. She further stated the centers are working with community colleges and banks to improve services offered to new Iowans. She commented there are currently six New Iowan Centers offering services throughout the state. She further



commented that the New Iowan Centers offer services ranging from providing interpreters to employment and financial services, to helping people enroll their children in school.

Ms. Donna Queen. Ms. Queen suggested that there should be more funding for after school programs for the youngest new Iowans. She stated many parents are unable to help with their children's homework and these after school programs are essential for the children to progress.

Ms. Salli Nichols. Ms. Nichols commented that there is an unbelievable amount of talent among young new Iowans. She stated they want to live here but do not have the proper documents so they must obtain illegal documents to get a job.

Mr. Rick Scheidel — Storm Lake High School Counselor. Mr. Scheidel suggested that if Iowa is going to encourage immigrants to come to Iowa and if they obtain a degree, Iowa should to help them obtain the proper paperwork so they can find work.

Ms. Julianna Smith — ESL Teacher From Storm Lake High School. Ms. Smith stated ESL teachers and interpreters need to be properly compensated for the services they provide.

Mr. Korey Contrell. Mr. Contrell stated the most significant problem facing new Iowans is the language barrier at the hospital or doctor's office. He noted many of the interpreters used at the local hospital are teenagers.

Ms. Ester Vieira — Storm Lake High School Spanish Teacher. Ms. Vieira commented that she and her husband legally emigrated to the United States but because of the type of visa obtained by her to enter the country, her husband is unable to work. She further commented that her application with the federal immigration authorities will not be processed until the year 2007. She suggested the federal government should speed up the application process for legal immigrants.

Mr. Miguel Meja. Mr. Meja suggested that immigration laws be simplified. He stated he entered the country under an HB1 visa and his wife entered under an HB4 visa, and because his wife entered under an HB4 visa she cannot work. He noted that his employer is not obligated to cover his wife under their health insurance plan because she entered the country under an HB4 visa.

Ms. Emilia Marroquin. Ms. Marroquin expressed her concerns about the state of health care for new Iowans. She stated the language barrier prevents many people suffering from depression from seeking counseling. She also noted that many people forgo dental care because they lack insurance.

Mr. Louis Navar. Mr. Navar emphasized that government should help hard-working people obtain legitimate documents so they can come out from the shadows and obtain lawful employment. He also commented that his father brought him to the United States illegally so he did not have a choice about being here, and that he was eventually granted amnesty.



New Iowans Study Committee Public Hearing

Mr. Mike Hanna — Storm Lake Schools. Mr. Hanna said the Storm Lake school system is helping children become truly bilingual. He noted the funding for an ESL program is currently enough to fund a three-year program, but it takes seven years to academically learn a language.

Mr. Hugo Cruz. Mr. Cruz stated he is an educated professional in his native Nicaragua. However, he noted that it is difficult for an educated professional from another country to obtain a professional license to practice their work in the United States. He stated many of the educated professionals from other countries must work for people in this country who are less educated than themselves.

Mr. Lowell Fields. Mr. Fields stated immigrants need to be able to obtain a driver's license. He stated many of the illegal immigrants were brought to this country by their parents. He also emphasized that it is a bad idea to have local police enforce immigration laws because people who need assistance will no longer go to the police for fear of being deported.

Ms. Sara Monroy. Ms. Monroy commented that education is the key to helping new Iowans. She stated that recently she was at the Capitol to learn about the legislature and that she was the only Hispanic out of 600 people in attendance.

Mr. Ciprian Hernandez. Mr. Hernandez stated he served in the United States military for 20 years. He further stated that many people who come to the United States work hard but do not receive pay raises. He expressed that immigrants need more education to get ahead.

Ms. Rosemary Aden. Ms. Aden suggested that illegal immigrants need to be able to obtain a driver's license. She emphasized that people are going to drive anyway, so why not give them a driver's license and make them get insurance.

Mr. Diego Memije. Mr. Memije stated he does not speak English, thus he does not feel confident speaking to doctors because of the language barrier. He also commented that health insurance is too expensive, which forces him to skip doctor visits and to just deal with sickness and pain.

Mr. Ken Livingston — Mayor of Denison. Mr. Livingston stated Denison has seen explosive immigrant growth in the past few years. He suggested Denison receive the next New Iowan Center.

Ms. Renee Seagram — Executive Director of the Community Health Center. Ms. Seagram stated that access to health care is a major problem and that many immigrants are using another person's health insurance card in order to receive care.

35471C